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Background, data and biographical information on the 104 first Jamestown settlers

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BACKGROUND, DATA AND BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON THE 104 FIRST JAMESTOWN SETTLERS

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Permanent colonization called for the common man as well as the adventurer, to whom life in the old England had become, for some reason or another, joyless and burdensome, and who welcomed the opportunity that the new lands offered to better his worldly estate. Colonization required leaders and capital, but it demanded people as well -- men, women and children -- to build homes, till the soil, and provide for the coming generations. Without colonists of this type, settlement was bound to be costly and permanance was never assured. Why they came, how they were organized, who were in the first boat load to Virginia and what became of them are questions this paper shall attempt to explore.

Conspicuous among the causes for colonization, in that it probably influenced the largest number of those who settled in North America, was the desire for land and an opportunity to make a home for wife and children. In the days of Eliabeth only a comparatively small part of England was available for tillage, and even that part of England had been considerably curtailed by the increase in sheep farming, the enclosure of the open fields and commons, and the conversion of tillable soil into pastures and plains.[1]

The lands reclaimed by turning pruprestures, assarts, and intakes into arable, draining the fenlands, and irrigating

where water was needed were trifling in extent as compares with the great reaches of a new continent and far more often benefited the landlord than the tenant. Not a project was set on foot looking to colonization in America that the promoters didn't hold out the tempting inducement of land to those whom they wished to attract as prospective settlers.

The small feudal landowner asn the tenent farmer were both discontented in England -- one with the depreciationg value of his landed estate; the other with the insufficiency of his acres for cultivation. Both were experiencing the changing conditions which were the result of the breaking up of the Medieval system of landholding, and the fall of prices. Several conditions tended to make the lower classes nesessitous SS and the upper classes covetous and greedy: decreasing profits from the soil, stationary or falling rents, the difficulty of finding laborers and the unreliability and transient character of those that were obtained, the growth of luxury and the cost of living, the demand for better and more varied food, housing supply and display. Tenants resented the retention of the old feudal incidents and a land law which favored landlords in all that concerned the use of the soil and the tenures by which it was held. They were growing impatient of manorial practices and payments that made occupation uncertain and living dangerous. They suffered from encroachments of their lords upon their fields and commons, the chase of hounds and huntsmen over their cultivated acres, conveyancing and tenure,

and the heavy tithes, taxes and rates. Laws of inheritance, conveyancing, and tenure, still medieval, were to remain medieval for many generations.[2.] The heavy feudal burdens upon farmer and tenant, still living in something of a medieval atmosphere made many a man long for the freer life of the Northwest, where land was plentiful and tenurial demands less likely to be imposed. Thus land-hunger and the desire of a greater amount of property-freedom were powerful inducements that drove the restless English people to migration overseas. The bulk of the colonial population was of the artisan and tenant class, holding as a rule some form of copyhold tenure.[3.]

Imagination played its part. All classes of the population in cities and buroughs and mostly along the eastern and southern coasts from East Anglia to the West Country were stirred by the visions of wealth and the tales of a sumptuously bountiful nature that were told by those who sent letters back from America.[4.]

Two other powerful and driving motives appear, which are different from those which have already been presented. The first was the mingling of the old crusading fervor with the mercantile spirit. The enterprise, the the mask of a missionary zeal to convert heathen Indians, finds itself in the books of Hakluyt and in every statement of plan and purpose drawn up by the companies.[5.] Finally, there were the motives of the upper-class leaders of society. For the merchants was the prospect of discovering a new route to the Orient; the foriegn

Policy makers desired to check the power of the King of Spain; the domestic politicians and financiers hoped to increase the national wealth by mining the expected gold.[6] These were personal hopes of the promoters, however, and hardly affected the common man, who was to be the planter.

Several general statements were written in the late sixteenth century as to the advantages to result from colonization. Captain Carlile set forth such an appeal in 1583, when he was seeking the assistance of the English merchants for establishing settlements in America. Colonies in that area, he said, would raise up communities which would consume English woolen goods; they would draw off the idle people of the kingdom; they would offer a promising field for the discovery of precious metals; and would open up the most direct passage to the Indian sea. Sir George Peckham, who was associated with Sir Humphrey Gilbert in the voyage of 1583, in his argument in favor of planting an English colony in the western world, set forth the same forcible reasons.[7]

After Sir Walter Raleigh abandoned all colonial plans in 1590, twelve years passed before anyone renewed the attempt. Under war conditions the Elizabethen attempt to found Virginia had failed. In the first year of the new reign, James I made peace on good terms which successful war had won. His pacifism gave peace to England and his subjects made use of that breathing space to sow the seeds of the British Empire.[8] Government laid down the conditions under which

colonization was possible, but private enterprise supplied the initiative, the money and the men.

Early in 1605, Captain George Waymouth was sent to probe the coast of North America. Sir John Popham, Lord Chief Justice of England, had heard about it, took "great pains" about planting a colony in Virginia, and declared himself ready to call all interested parties before him and "by their advice set down the best manner of project."[9.]

In an attempt to judge the record of the Virginia Company Adventurers, it is evident that they were truly adventurers in a new area of commercial speculation, with little previous experience to guide them. The company can be seen as three distinct groups to English speculators.

The most experienced and most substantial of them were the London merchants. Foremost among these was Sir Thomas Smith, who served for thirteen years as governor of the company. Born of a merchant's family he gained a quick wealth, involving himself in the Haberdasher's and Skinner's companies, adventures for the Northwest Passage, the Levant Company, Muscovy Company and the East India Company. Undoubtedly the merchants who followed Smith's leadership approached Virginia with the same hopes and methods to problems of western exploits in India, the Levant and the Baltic. The attempt to adopt the old machinery explain partly the early commercial failures in America.

Second to the merchants in importance was a powerful

group led by the Rich Family. This group was better known for its participation in sixteenth century piracy, therefore its interest in America was for a base for piracy and of a colonial port in time of war.

A third body of adventures presented an interesting cross section of English people: Merchants of small means, infected by the glories of speculation, country gentry stirred by the appeal of an adventurous enterprise, and great lords who added Virginia to the long list of social activities. In common with the other adventurers, they anticipated some profit from their investment and they followed the merchants with patriotic enthusiasm and expectation.[10.]

With these groups sharing common purposes, the next step was the drafting of a charter, in which Sir John Popham took the lead. He was influenced by Robert Cecil, recently created Earl of Salisbury and His Majesty's principal secretary, and possibly Sir Edward Coke, attorney general, and John Doddridge, Solicitor General.[11.]

There were three different proposals for the organization of the government of the company. The two extremes were the proposal for private settlement advanced by Lord Arundell in 1605, and the governmental plan proposed by Sir John Popham. Popham believed that the North American coast between the areas claimed or occupied by Spain and France should be taken under King James' protection and removed from private speculation. In between, there was the suggestion of Edward Hayes for a

joint publis and private enterprise with the consent of Parliament involved. The idea of Parliamentary hands poking around in the Virginia project did not appeal to the King, so a compromise was reached through the modification of Popham's royal company into a hybrid organization (which has usually been) labelled a "public joint-stock company."[12.]

Both old and new adventurers for American colonization were brought together in the magnates of London, Bristol and Plymouth. Virginia was divided into a northern and a southern colony, but its funds were made available for the whole project. Investment was solely by individuals, in the corporate form of joint-stock sompanies, one for each colony (thus the Virginia Company), to be privately managed under the supervision of a council in London composed of thirteen persons directly responsible to the crown. With these basic principals established and approved, it was just a step to the preparation of the final petition, followed by the issuance of the chancery warrant and the letters patent.

Eight individuals were named in the charter as suitors. Four were representatives of the group to colonize "southern" Virginia. Of these Richard Hakluyt was the most prominent. Sir Thomas Gates and Edward Maria Wingfield were old soldiers; Gates had already been considered as governor of the colony and Wingfield was ready to go in person with the first shipment. The fourth patentee, Sir George Somers, whose experience as a privateer, contributed to the success of the ve

venture.[13]

After naming the patentees, the charter defined the geographical baoundaries for the proposed colony. The southern limit was set at 34° north latitude which was roughly where Spanish occupation north from Florida had died out. The northern limit was set at 45° north latitude, almost precicely at Passamaquoddy Bay -- today's boundary between the United States and Canada.[14]

Afeer an exhortation to the patentees to spread the Christian religion to the "Infidels and savages living in Those partes",[15] the charter turns to full and legal explanations of where the conlonists may settle and build, how they chall be organized in London, and every conceivable detail of life in the colonies -- economic, financial and legal. Two days after the promulgation of the charter, it was dated, signed and sealed with the Privy Seale.[16]

The affairs of the company were to be managed by a treasurer and council, resident in England, and appointed and controlled by the freemen assembled in general court. The colony in Virginia was only adjunct to the company, and its management was left, without other conventional and prefunctory restrictions, to the treasurer and council. The first treasurer was Sir Thomas Smith, who was also the First president of the East India Company, a great merchant in his day, whose influence in Virginia was predominent.[17]

Smith and his adsociates were little interested in the

transmissions of the English insititions to the New World. They did not regard Virginia, as the historians are sometimes prone to do, in the interesting idea of an experiment in constitutional liberalism, or conceive of the company as the mother of nations. Their object was to pay dividends to the shareholders, and the colonist was expected to exploit the resources of Virginia for the benefit of the company, of which he was a member. Virginia was, in fact, a plantation owndd by the company; its settlers were to be the company's servants, freely transported in its vessels, fed and housed at its expence, the produst of their labor at its disposal for the benefit of all concerned.[17].

Under the charter of 1606, there were no sufficient incentives for the development of the main element in the scheme, namely the providing of suitable settlers. This side of the enterprise was to be carried on by the Royal Council, but during the three years the scheme had been in operation, it had advanced rather as a commercial than a conlonizing undertaking. The Council had established no organization which would make the emigration of settlers easy. If then, the plantation was to increase rapidly, such an organization must be created. The simplest method was to place colonizing and commercial branches under one joint-stock company, which would arrange for the raising of capital, fo the transportation of planters and for the survey and division of lands. The necessary change was affected by the Second Charter,

which was drafted in Feburary 1609.[18]

It was difficult to obtain persons living in comfortable homes to emigrate to distant Virginia, and the Virginia Company was compelled to engage a number of people such as lived in the filthy cottages of the White Chaple suburb, the area of hopeless poverty, some of whom would be purified by a change of scene and atmosphere.[19]

To command the expedition and inject the knowledge of their experience, the company chose five important sea-captains of the day. Captain Newport was the commander-in-Chief of the first expedition, and a councilor, and had gone back and forth from Virginia to England on various voyages ever since. He had then only recently returned to Virginia with Sir Thomas ~~Gee~~ Gates, having been involved with him in the shipwreck on the Bermudas. He was one of the greatest of England's sea-captains; his services both before and after his connection with the Virginia enterprise being highly honorable.

Captain Martin, one of the original councilors, was a brave and determined man. He was the son of Sir Richard Martin, bred to the law, but became engaged by preference in "Martial affairs." He commanded a ship in one of Drake's voyages, and was "Master of the Ordinnance" at Jamestown, and highly honored and rewarded by the company, though he gave trouble about the patent.

Captain Ratcliffe had commanded the Discovery in the first voyage, and had been councilor and president.

Robert Tyndall was a sailor, or sea-captain. He made three voyages to Virginia, and became the owner of Tyndall's Point, now called Glouster Point, opposite Yorktown. He also made what is probably the first map of the country explored by the English.[20.]

Only so much is known about the leaders of the voyage, but what is known about the other 102 men on the tiny ships who were to be the planters? Admittedly, much of this data is woefully incomplete. It simply has not padded into the possession of modern colonial scholars, nor, sad to say, it may ever. The segment of data that is available, however, is scattered in a wide diversity of sources, many of them not accessible to the general reading public.

Neither Percy nor Newport mention the exact number, and Smith's enumeration seems inexact. He names eighty-two, and states that there were others, making the number up to 100.[21.] Modern researchers have found from lists, accounts and records, that the number of original settlers was 104. They have found the names, occupations and dates of fifty-eight men; the names and occupations of twenty-six; the names and dates of five; and "divers others" totaling fifteen.

Of the eighty-four planters about which we know their names and occupations, we find that forty-seven or more than one-half of the number were classified as gentlemen. The remaining men were classed as follows:[22.]

Laborers - 12	Sailors - 2
Councilors - 6	Barber - 1
Carpenters - 4	Drummer - 1
Boys - 4	Mason - 1
Bricklayers - 2	Tailor - 1
Surgeons - 2	Blacksmith - 1

From this list one can deduce three statements: 1.) The group was an experimental cross section of general crafts and personalities with no definite type of yield from Virginia yet established. The 1608 voyage included eight Polish and German experts in the manufacture of glass, tar, pitch, and soap ashes. 2.) The Adventurers had no conception of survival in a primeval wilderness, hence the inclusion of specific luxury craftsmen, which seemed to anticipate an immediate division of labor. The reverse was found more workable in the early years, when everyone was forced into agriculture and being a jack-of-all-trades. 3.) The inclusion of gentry, which balanced the classes of Jamestown society, paralleled those in the mother country -- government, craftsmen, laborers, navy and gentry.

On May 13, 1607, three small English ships approached Jamestown Island in Virginia: The Susan Constant carried seventy-one persons; the Godspeed, fifty-two persons; and the Discovery, a pinnace, carried twenty-one persons. The next day, May 14, George Percy records, "we landed all our men, which were set to worke about the fortification, others some to watch and ward as it was convenient." After a somewhat hopefull and prosperous spring, conditions changed drastically within the short span of summer and fall of 1607. The Indians

became cautious and distrustful, and provisions, not sufficiently augmented from the country, began to run low. Spoilage destroyed some food, and, with the coming of the hot, humid weather, the brackish drinking water proved dangerous. In August, death struck often and quickly, taking among others the stabilizing hand of Captain Gosnold. Inexperience, unwillingness, or inability due to insufficient food, to do the hard work that was necessary and the lack of sufficient information about how to survive in a primeval land led to bickering, disagreements, and, to what was more serious, inaction.

By September 20, 1607, 46 of the original 104 settlers were dead, and 58 were alive in Jamestown. By January 12, 1608, two-thirds of the original settlers had perished; 66 were dead, 38 remained. On that same date, Captain Christopher Newport arrived, bringing with him from England the first part of the First Supply. The addition of new men into Jamestown makes it increasingly difficult to trace the presence, or absence, there of the original settlers. Nevertheless, by January 20, 1609, it seems apparent that only 32 of the first 104 were alive in Jamestown.[23.]

1612 and 1613 witnessed the first significant growth outside of the confines of Jamestown. New towns and large plantations spread rapidly along the James and its tributaries. The pace of life in early Virginia began to spread noticeably, in line with the acceleration of the flow of immigrants into the colony. By 1620, perhaps no more than 14 or 15 of the

original colonists were still alive. Of that number, about ten remained in Virginia. Slowly, one by one, this small group of survivors dwindled as the years hurried swiftly by, until the last planter, John Laydon, passed from the scene, probably sometime between 1645 and 1655. By then, Colonial Virginia had anchored its roots firmly in the foundation of survival.[24.]

To give a biographical sketch of all 104 first settlers would be too lengthy, often repetitious and moreover impossible with the limited amount of information available. However, the ten men who survived 1620 and remained in Virginia, as mentioned above, led interesting and somewhat recorded lives. It is interesting to note that of the ten, only three gentlemen survived; the rest were laborers (3), a bricklayer, a blacksmith, a boy and a councilor.

Samuel Collier, the boy in 1607, went with Captain John Smith and a party in December of 1608, to look for the lost colony of Sir Walter Raleigh. They left Collier with the Indians to become proficient in the Indian language.[25.] He died during the fall of 1622, when accidently shot and killed, while walking one night by a sentinel at Kecaoughton (Hampton).[26.]

John Dods, a laborer, came over on the Susan Constant, aged 36.[27.] In 1628, he appeared in court at James City to settle a dispute with William Vincent over land and personal property.[28.] The Muster taken on February 3, 1625, in Neck-of-Land, Charles City, lists a John Deds and a year of his birth

as 1588 or 1589.[29]

William Garrett, a laborer, appears in the records on November 23, 1620, in a petition considered before the Court of the Virginia Company of London.[30] But he was not included in the muster of February 26, 1624, nor in the muster of January, 1625.[31]

John Laydon, the last surviving member of the first boat load, was born in 1581 and came on the Susan Constant as a laborer. He married Ann Burras, Mrs. Forrest's maid, who came in the Secon Supply (The Mary Margrett) in 1608. This marriage was the first solemnized in English America. Virginia Laydon, born in Virginia in 1609, was the first child born in the colony.[32] In a list of Titles and Landowners in Virginia in 1625, Laydon is mentioned in Coxendale within the Corporation of Henrico, owning 200 acres "upon a consideration expressed in the order of court."[33] This consideration may have been the birth of the first child.

John Martin, a sea captain and a councilor, was mentioned more extensively above. He was last heard of in 1630, on his estate, Brandon of the James.[34]

Nathaniel Powell, a gentleman, was killed in an Indian uprising on March 22, 1622, at Powell Brook.[35]

James Read, a blacksmith by trade, was still alive on February 18, 1609, when he returned from a six-week journey in search of food.[36] He died in Virginia sometime before March 23, 1622, on which date he is referred to as being deceased in

a petition of his widow to the Virginia Company of London.[37]

John Waller. a gentleman, was still alive on December 2, 1622, when his request for land due him was being considered by the court of the Virginia Company of London.[38] But he was not in the Muster of Feruary, 1624, or January, 1625.[39]

Thomas Webbe, a gentleman, with another man named Price, tried to avoid the tyrannies of Sir Thomas Dale, but was overtaken and executed. This was known as the "Webbe and Price design."[40] He was granted three shares of land by the court of the Virginia Company of London on July 20, 1621,[41] but was not mentioned in the Muster of January 1625.[42]

William White, a laborer, died on September 22, 1624. His death and burial are mentioned in the February 17, 1625 Muster.[43]

These ten settlers, despite hardship, suffering, death, discouragement and defeats, lived to see that a great deal had been accomplished in Virginia. They had already become "ancient planters," had met and learned many of the ways of the wilderness and the new environment. They had learned to survive and had gained knowledge of the country's advantages and disadvantages and its nature and extent. After many a false start, a source of wealth had been found in tobacco. Security was coming to replace insecurity and individual well-being was rising above the earlier general storehouse or magazine system. Government, also, after several changes of direction, had become stable and even embraced a

representative legislative assembly. It seems that King James I, when he took over in 1625, directly, the management of the Colony, must have found that the Virginia Company of London had built well in the New World.

FOOTNOTES

1. Andrews, The Colonial Period of American History (New Haven, 1933), I, 53.

2. Ibid., 64.

3. Nell Nugent, Cavaliers and Pioneers (Richmond, Va., 1934), xxviii.

4. Andrews, The Colonial Period... 68.

5. Alexander Brown, ed., The Genesis of the United States (Boston, 1964), I, 52.

6. Philip Barbour, The Jamestown Voyages Under the First Charter, 1606 - 1609 (Cambridge, University Press, 1969), 6.

7. Brown, The Genesis of the United States, 53.

8. Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, The First Americans 1607 - 1690 (New York, 1927), II, 99.

9. Barbour, The Jamestown Voyages, 7.

10. Wesley Frank Craven, The Dissolution of the Virginia Company of London (New York, 1932), 25.

11. Barbour, The Jamestown Voyages, 8.

12. Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., Virginia Company, the Records of the Virginia Company of London (Washington, D.C., 1906-1935), I, 3.

13. William Strachey, The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania (Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund, eds., London, 1953), 64.

14. Kingsbury, Virginia Company Records, 6.

15. The Parliamentary Register - Analytic for Charters of the British Colonies in America, (1775).

16. Kingsbury, Virginia Company Records, 8.

17. Carl Lotus Becker, The Beginnings of the American People (New York, 1915), 59.

18. William Robert Scott, The constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint Stock Companies to 1720 (Cambridge at University Press, 1910), II, 249.

19. Edward D. Neille, D.D., Virginia Governors under the London Company (St. Paul,Minn., 1889), 89.

20. Conway W. Sams, The Conquest of Virginia -- Third Attempt (New York, 1939), 83-84.

21. John Smith, The Travels and Works of Captain John Smith (Edward Arber, ed., Edinburgh, 1910), I, 206.

22. William S. Simpson, Jr., Biographical Data on the Original 104 Settlers who Landed at Jamestown,Virginia in May, 1607 (Richmond, Va., 1968), 1,2,8.

23. Ibid., 9.

24. Ibid., 1,2,8.

25. Smith, Travels and Works, 599.

26. John Camden Hotten, ed., The Original Lists of Persons of Quality... And Others Who Went from Great Britain to the American Plantations, 1600-1700 (New York, 1880), 202.

27. H. R. McIlwaine, ed., Minutes of the Council and General Court of Virginia, 1622-1632 (Washington, 1924), 166.

28. Kingsbury, The Records of the Virginia Company, I, 419.

29. Hotten, The Original List of Persons of Quality, 169-188.

30. Ibid., 169-188.

31. Ibid., 201-265.

32. Ibid., 244.

33. Nell Nugent, ed., Minutes of the Council and General Court of Colonial Virginia: 1622-1632, 1670-1676 (Washington, 1924), I, 146.

34. Samuel Bemiss, Ancient Adventurers; A Collection of Essays (1959), 27.

35. Smith, Travels and Works, 575.

36. Anas Todkill, "The Proceedings of the English Colonies in Virginia since their first beginning...in...1606, till this present 1612"

37. Kingsbury, Records of the Virginia Company, I, 619.

38. Ibid., II, 145.

39. Hotten, The Original Lists of Persons of Quality, 169-188.

40. Kingsbury, Records of the Virginia Company, I, 509.

41. Hotten, The Original Lists of Persons of Quality, 169-188.

42. Ibid., 201-265.

43. Ibid., 257.

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